



Koller wins Championship with Barcelona double

22nd September, 2019 – GT Cup Open Europe, Barcelona

A perfect weekend for Hans-Peter Koller and Edoardo Liberati – pole and two race victories – left Koller with an unassailable lead at the top of the Pro-Am Championship.



Barcelona hosted the penultimate round of the GT Cup Open Europe Championship this weekend, and Koller, ably assisted by his Pro driver Liberati, was on top of both the overall and Pro-Am standings while Brazilian duo Mauro and Toni still held an outside chance of taking Am class honours. After two days of practising in glorious sunshine Saturday morning bought heavy rain to the Catalan track. Qualifying got underway as thunder cracked overhead but was soon red flagged and the grid was decided according to the combined times from free practice giving Toni a start from third and Koller from fifth.

It was dry as the cars lined up on the grid but rain started to fall again just as they set off on their formation lap. The race started behind the safety car and both of the VSR cars dived straight into the pits to put wets on. The volume of standing water on the circuit was immediately a problem and Toni fell foul to aquaplaning on his out lap, damaging the number 27 car and forcing the team to retire it from the rest of the weekend. The safety car led the field for five laps before returning to the pits just four minutes before the pit window was due to open. Koller held off Leutwiler at the restart and the two had a good scrap in the tricky conditions before the Porsche got ahead. Koller pitted to give the VSR Lamborghini to Liberati on lap eight and after discounting the significant twenty second handicap rejoined well down the order. Immediately on the pace the Italian set three fastest laps in succession and by lap twelve had caught Solieri and Leutwiler who were fighting over sixth place. Liberati overtook Leutwiler under braking at the chicane and repeated the move on Solieri a lap later before storming past Pujeu's McLaren on the straight. Free from traffic Liberati was soon setting fastest laps again as he continued to close on the front runners. By lap fifteen he had caught and passed De Wilde and De Fulgencio and had the second placed Audi in his sights. This was easily despatched a lap later leaving Liberati with ten minutes to catch the leading Porsche of Font. By lap eighteen he was right on his tail and one tour later he took the lead of the race and from there cruised to the chequered flag.



Liberati qualified the sole remaining VSR Lamborghini for Sunday's race and took his fifth pole of the season, beating Cerqueda's Audi by just under two tenths of a second. A clean start saw him keep the lead and with a stunningly consistent show of pace he had pulled out a twenty-two second gap to the rest of the field by the time the pit window opened. He stayed out until just before it shut, pitting on lap fifteen for Koller to take over and discounting their twenty second success handicap. Koller put in a composed stint to maintain the race lead despite increasing pressure from Leutwiler who closed up to within a handful of seconds in the final laps. The VSR driver took the chequered flag and became the first GT Cup Open Europe Champion

to be crowned, winning the Pro-Am Championship. With one round left to go at Monza next month attention now turns to the overall title which is still up for grabs.

Photos by Fotospeedy

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